DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 463 172 SE 065 834

AUTHOR	Jenkins, Deborah Bainer
TITLE	Organizational Structure of Effective vs. Less Effective Partnerships.
PUB DATE	2001-10-00
NOTE	39p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, October 24-27, 2001).
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Cooperation; *Educational Change; Elementary Education; *Partnerships in Education; *Professional Development; *School Business Relationship; Science Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Endurance

ABSTRACT

Why do some educational partnerships endure while others soon meet their demise? Wright's (1994) model of group organization contrasts how different configurations are formed, solve problems, and endure in difficult contexts. When this model is applied to data gathered from group members about why their partnerships did or did not endure, it appears that enduring partnerships are often organized in a traditional Team configuration. However, partnerships organized as more diverse Packs may be more effective in troubled contexts or in difficult elementary school settings. (Contains 17 references.) (Author/MM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 463 172

Organizational Structure of Effective vs. Less Effective Partnerships

Deborah Bainer Jenkins, Ph.D.

Professor, School Improvement/Curriculum and Instruction

State University of West Georgia

Carrollton, GA 30118-5110

djenkins@westga.edu

Home phone: 404-629-5800

Office phone: 770-836-4461

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

D. Bainer Jenkins

Session S.0800.SN

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL October 24-27, 2001.

Acknowledgement: The author thanks Patricia Barron and Diane Cantrell for their input on this manuscript, and for their collaboration with the partnership programs described and utilized in this study.

ED458834

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABSTRACT

Why do some educational partnerships endure while others soon meet their demise? Wright's (1994) model of group organization contrasts how different configurations are formed, solve problems, and endure in difficult contexts. When this model is applied to data gathered from group members about why their partnerships did or did not endure, it appears that enduring partnerships are often organized in a traditional Team configuration. However, partnerships organized as more diverse Packs may be more effective in troubled contexts or in difficult elementary school settings.

Increasingly across the past two decades, discussions about school reform advocated educational partnerships as a promising vehicle to provide resources, improve teaching, and enhance student learning. Indeed, collaboration among educators at all levels with state and local policymakers, business and industry representatives, parents, and the community at large is viewed as essential to bringing about significant change in education.

In the United States, the federal government recognized the need for schools to draw upon the resources of the business community in the early 1980s. As a result, partnerships sprang up around the country at an astonishing rate. By 1989, the Department of Education estimated that over 140,000 partnerships between schools and businesses existed nationwide (Rigden, 1991). The momentum to establish partnerships continues, as illustrated by the 1996 National Science Foundation invitational theme, Dynamic partnerships: Seeding and sustaining education reform, and NSF's interest in funding collaborative partnerships as the best means to achieve lasting reform in education (L.S. Willimas, personal communication, December 13, 1995). National organizations such as the Points of Light Foundation, established by then president George Bush, and the National Association for Partnerships in Education (NAPE) and its state affiliates coordinate and expand partnership efforts into businesses, industries, and agencies of all sizes.

The dynamic nature and scope of partnerships makes it difficult to succinctly describe what an educational partnership is. Rigden (1991) organizes partnerships along a continuum which highlights the variety of forms and activities partnerships can assume (see Figure 1). These include "adopt-a-school" relationships, originally proposed to link businesses with urban schools in order to improve employment opportunities for inner-city youths (Britt, 1985/86) and "great projects" partnerships in which volunteers from businesses or agencies work closely with schools for a specific innovation such as a new reading program or a science fair. In "reform based" or collaborative partnerships, businesses or agencies enter into long-term relationships with schools specifically to impact instruction, student learning, and teacher empowerment and ultimately to bring about school reform (Rigden, 1992).

Insert Figure 1

It seems, then, that there is no one blueprint for how partnerships should be configured or the types of activities in which they should engage (Sills, Barron, & Heath., 1993). In nearly a decade of working with educational partnerships, we observed that some partnership efforts were dynamic and active from their inception, while others never got off the ground. Some partnership teams suffered trauma to their membership or context yet endured, while others disbanded when faced with moderate or sometimes imagined stress from their environmental context. This led us to wonder what characterizes partnerships which endure (Bainer, 1998). If there is not one blueprint for partnerships, are there core characteristics essential to a partnership's effectiveness and endurance that can guide us in forming and sustaining educational partnerships?

Our study was initially directed at exploring the question: Why do partnerships endure? It assumed that endurance is an indicator of an effective partnering relationship. Further, it assumed that an enduring partnership effort is more likely to achieve its educational goals than partnerships that do not endure. While reflecting on the patterns of interactions that emerged from the data, however, it was apparent that partnership endurance could best be interpreted in light of organizational theory. Thus, this paper refocuses the original study. The paper first summarizes Wright's (1994, 1996) model of group functioning which posits three organizational patterns. Next, it describes the funded partnership program and the qualities of partnerships that endured vs. those which disbanded, as perceived by 62 team leaders. Lastly, it compares Wright's model to the participants' experiences with partnering and explores implications for establishing educational partnerships that can lead to school reform.

For the text of this paper, the term "partnership" refers to a relationship between two or more individuals or agencies, at least one of which is an educator, school, or school district. The term "resource professional" refers to an individual involved in a working relationship with educators aimed at sharing expertise in order to impact education. Resource professionals are generally from businesses, industries, or government, health care, or community agencies but may also be private citizens such as farmers or hobbyists who hold some content expertise, especially in science.

Models of Effective Partnerships

Cobb and Quaglia (1994) point out that we need to know more about partnerships in order to ensure successful school reform. The literature offers models of group efforts derived from investigating organizational systems (Hord, 1981), observing interactions

during program evaluations (Wichienwong, 1988), and examining established partnerships between businesses and schools (Cobb and Quaglia, 1994; Sills et al., 1993). These models agree that the most effective partnerships are dynamic and interactive, work toward common goals, and are characterized by equality and a high level of commitment among group members (see Bainer, 1997, for a fuller discussion).

In contrast, Wright (1994, 1996) presents a model of group efforts derived from mathematical theory. Wright's theoretical model provides insight into the organizational pattern and microstructure of group efforts such as partnerships. By applying Rasch measurement, Wright develops a mathematic which describes the different ways groups organize themselves such that their members' individual abilities can be combined mathematically to calculate an expected measure of overall group effectiveness. This "composition analysis" suggests three measurable organizational patterns for group efforts such as partnerships: Teams, Packs, and Chains.

Teams are "concatenations of relative strengths, accumulated in linear form" (Wright, 1994, p. 30). Basically, this means that Teams are groups of people who agree with and support each other. Like a well-functioning jury, a Team relies on consensus and disagreements paralyze its functioning. The strength of a Team is based on the strength of its individual members, and members use their strength to help the team solve problems. Individual strengths are stronger than the problems the Team experiences, so utilizing these strengths makes the Team appear to be decisive. This organizational configuration is most effective at solving problems that can be made easy, performing routine tasks, and working in relatively problem-free contexts because the group members generally agree easily on one course of action that is obvious to them. When a

Team faces a challenge and is successful in solving it, the Team is encouraged to continue cooperating. The Team is the least effective organizational configuration in difficult contexts or when the group is faced with difficult problems because of the lack of disagreement and divergent thinking within the group. Wright (1994) sees the Team composition exhibited on a football team. The Team is united, win or lose; individual errors hurt the Team. Individuals who use their outstanding strength for their own recognition rather than for the overall team effort can also hurt the Team. Thus, the Team's overall success is jeopardized by weaknesses, disagreements, or independence within the Team.

Packs are "concatenations of absolute strengths accumulated exponentially" (Wright, 1994, p. 32). That is, Packs are characterized by diversity and independence. The members of Packs regularly disagree with each other, but the Pack collectively benefits as it synergistically works through problems and disagreements, drawing upon the divergent approaches and viewpoints of its members. Because more members bring more diversity to the group effort, a Pack becomes stronger as it increases in size. A Pack succeeds when any individual member succeeds. The Pack configuration works best at solving intermediate and hard problems and functions well in difficult contexts. Wright (1994) explains that a group of people looking for lost keys is acting like a Pack: the keys are found when everyone agrees to disagree about where to look for them. A Team configuration, where the whole group agreed to look in one place, then another, then another is a less effective way to locate lost keys.

Chains are "concatenations of connections of absolute weaknesses in exponential form (Wright, 1994, p. 31). Mountain climbers are organized as Chains. Climbers are

roped together; one moves forward while others hold on; all climbers know when it is their turn to move and when they need to hold on and serve as anchors. If one climber acts out of turn, the entire group is endangered. A climber who falters may be saved by the climbers to whom he is roped. Chains of climbers, then, work best when each member knows what role to perform and does it. Wright (1996) explains that Chains work as connections of imperfect agreements, but that they rely on solidarity. As a project develops and the need for a coordinated effort becomes apparent, Chains develop and create a cooperating work force. Discord and disagreements are harmful to the Chain organizational pattern. Because of this, the strength of a group which is organized as a Chain decreases as the group increases in size because this increases the likelihood of disagreements. Consider a task force whose large membership hinders its effective functioning. Stressful or difficult contexts limit a Chain's ability to solve problems, but this organizational configuration is still more effective at solving difficult problems and working in difficult contexts than are Teams.

Wright's theoretical model (1994) suggests three somewhat related organizational configurations. Wright (1996) posits that group projects evolve through a core sequence of Pack to Chain to Team: the Pack solving the hard initial problems, the transitional Chain building solidarity and group structure, and the Team ultimately implementing and maintaining the project. A look at the experience of teachers and resource professionals engaged in reform-based partnerships to implement instructional reform in elementary school settings contextualizes Wright's model. In applying Wright's model, we investigated whether partnerships are organized as Packs or as Teams. Further, we

explored if one organizational structure was more effective than the other. That is, which configuration enables a partnership to endure in elementary school contexts?

Research Study

Program Description

An essential first step to understanding the partnership experience is to investigate to what team members ascribe their effectiveness or demise. This question was explored with teachers and resource professionals participating in two branches of a funded program: Partnering for Elementary Environmental Science (PEES) and Sciencing with Watersheds, Environmental Education, and Partnerships (SWEEP) (Bainer, Barron, & Cantrell, 1998a, 1998b). The program sought primarily to provide professional development for elementary (K-6) classroom teachers in order to enhance science instruction and thereby to improve student learning.

The professional development thrust was threefold (see Bainer, Barron, and Cantrell, 1996/96). First, the program overcame teachers' apprehension about teaching activity-based science by engaging them in hands-on learning and debriefing them about the experience from their (i.e., the learner's) point of view and from the facilitator or teacher's perspective. Discussions focused on how to plan, implement, and evaluate hands-on learning experiences as well as how to manage students and materials for these activities. Second, the program acquainted teachers with readily available, inexpensive resources and agency-sponsored science and environmental education programs by providing a library of materials. Internationally recognized programs such as Project Learning Tree, Project WET, and Project Wild were represented as well as instructional trade books. Participants perused the materials and used them in their planning, engaged

in activities from these resources so they could "get a feel" for the programs, and purchased selected resources for classroom use using funds provided by the project. Finally, and most important for this report, teachers' lack of science content knowledge was addressed by pairing them with science content experts (i.e., resource professionals). Most of these resource professionals were employees of the state Department of Natural Resources (divisions of wildlife, forestry, soil and water conservation, geological survey, parks and recreation, recycling and litter prevention, reclamation, natural areas and preserves, water, and real estate and land management) or county recycling, parks and recreation, soil and water conservation, or health agencies. Other content experts represented the Environmental Protection Agency, local conservation and environmental groups, and science-related businesses (Meade Paper Company and Lockheade Martin). In addition, a few retired farmers, horticulturists, and teachers with strong applied science backgrounds volunteered as resource professionals. The goal was to establish reform-based partnerships committed to collaborative, school-based work for at least one year, and dedicated to improving science instruction.

During a short, intensive summer institute, teachers and resource professionals were trained in pedagogy and partnering skills, developed their partnering relationship, identified curriculum and learning goals, and planned lessons to meet those goals across the upcoming academic year. Two day-long conferences were held during the academic year to bring the partnership teams together to share, evaluate, reflect, socialize, solve problems, and learn about new resources. In addition, participants periodically received newsletters and site visits from project staff or members of other teams, and project staff were available for consultation throughout the year.

The program engaged nearly 400 individuals in partnership teams across the five years of state and federal funding, all in one mid-western state. Partnership teams ranged in size from two members (one teacher and one resource professional) to seven (five teachers and two resource professionals). Most partnerships consisted of two or three teachers working with one resource professional, however. Two-thirds of the teams were based in rural or small town elementary (K-6) schools, with the remainder in suburban and urban settings.

One year after the funding ceased, we wondered how many of the partnerships were still functioning and why some partnerships endured while others met an early demise. Was this related to their structural organization?

In-depth telephone interviews with all team leaders (n=62) and focus groups with selected team members (n = 26) were conducted to ascertain which partnership teams persisted beyond the funding period and to understand their organizational structure and the stressors they encountered during their partnership experience. The prearranged telephone interviews asked leaders to describe the relationship among their partnership team members, any changes in their team's membership over the years, and any crises their team had encountered. They were asked to what they attributed their team's endurance or demise, and to provide any additional information that would help others understand the partnership experience. Focus groups, each with 10-12 individuals who had participated in partnerships for at least one year, responded to similar questions.

The data were transcribed, content anaylzed, then verfied by independent researchers. In an on-going, inductive analysis (Patton, 1990), interview data were organized by themes that appeared in response to various questions. The patterns that

emerged from the data became more obvious as the number of completed interviews increased and this data was merged with focus group data. Through this scrutinization of data, three categories of characteristics were apparent (Althrichter, Posch, & Somekn, 1993). These clusters seemed to represent strong, moderate, and low predictors of a partnership's endurance or demise.

Results

Of the 62 team leaders interviewed, 57 were teachers, three were resource professionals, and two were school administrators. Thirty-one of the leaders reported that their partnerships were still active. Of these, six teams had completed one year of partnering, 12 teams completed two years, and seven and six teams completed three and four years of partnering respectively. All of these teams planned to continue their activity at least through the current academic year. The remaining 31 teams had disbanded, according to their leaders' interviews. Three of those teams never made it through their first year of partnering. Nineteen teams disbanded at the end of their one-year commitment to the program. Other teams continued before disbanding: two teams partnered for two years, two teams completed three years of partnering, and five teams worked together for four years before disbanding. Considering both active and inactive teams, the mean years of partnering before disbanding was two, the median was two years, and the mode was one year (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1

Reasons why partnerships endure. Responses to interviews and focus groups suggested seven characteristics of partnerships which were most frequently mentioned as reasons why the partnership endured. These "strong predictors" are (see Table 2):

1. A strong resource professional who generates ideas, works well with children, gathers resources, prepares in advance for activities, provides access to other resource professionals, provides content knowledge, is enthusiastic, and is a motivator.
2. Commitment to the program, including taking the program seriously, determining to finish the year-long plan, and committing time and resources to the program.
3. Assistance in the classroom, specifically having the team members, parents, and/or volunteers assist with gathering resources, making phone calls, and dong the "legwork" required of an activity-based, thematic curriculum.
4. Collaboration and interaction with other adults (teachers and resource professionals) who serve as sounding boards, enjoy working and learning from each other, fill in gaps in each others' knowledge of science and pedagogy, share similar expectations, and are trustworthy.
5. A commitment to science education and the environment, including a desire to make science learning fun, to provide an educationally sound program, to meet the district and state science objectives, and to share a love of science and the environment and, ideally, to instill environmental stewardship in students.
6. Benefits for the children such as challenging them toward higher order thinking and problem solving, providing resource professionals as role models, and providing positive learning experiences to enable them to learn content more readily, to work with students from other grade levels, and to relate concepts they learned in science to the "real world" of the environment.
7. Positive relationships among partners including shared interests and age cohorts, and compatible philosophies, attitudes toward children and instructional approaches.

Team members often shared that collaboration was easy because team members enjoyed working and learning together and because they thought alike and helped each other solve problems. Consequently, strong friendships sometimes formed.

Four "moderate predictors," or qualities mentioned less frequently as reasons why partnerships endure, were identified in the content analysis of the interviews and focus groups. These are:

1. Excitement and satisfaction with the program because of the hands-on learning and field trips it encourages, the questions it raises in students' minds which they subsequently explore, the positive reactions of students to the program, and the long term changes seen in students' behavior and learning.
2. Professional growth and development, especially in the areas of student management, science content, and team-building. Expanded community networks through which to learn of professional development opportunities and resources were also a plus.
3. Parents who share excitement for the program, support and volunteer for the program, and request that their children be involved in the program.
4. Administrative support providing program visibility within the building and district, and facilitating the expansion of the program to include additional teachers and classrooms.

Five "low predictors" of partnership endurance were suggested from the content analysis of the interviews and focus groups. These qualities were mentioned less frequently than moderate predictors, and much less frequently than strong predictors. They are:

1. Equity, especially that all team members cooperate and share leadership.

2. Flexibility about scheduling and communication.
3. Positive relationships with children, notably being accepted as a regular teacher in team teaching situations, having an opportunity to work with children, and the enthusiasm and "hugs" offered by the children toward the team members.
4. Benefits for the school including money raised from recycling projects, development of land labs and outdoor classrooms, and professional growth provided by project team members for other teachers in the school and district.
5. Benefits for the community such as recycling activities and park clean up.

Insert Table 2

Reasons for partnerships' demise. Similarly, the interviews and focus group data provided by members and leaders of teams which were no longer in existence were examined for characteristics which led to their demise. Based on frequency of mention, these were categorized as "strong," "moderate," or "low predictors" of the demise of a partnership.

Five qualities were suggested as "strong predictors" of partnership demise, as follows (see Table 3):

1. Lack of commitment by the resource professional, demonstrated by not wanting to partner, to work with children, or to make a long-term often because of competing demands for time.
2. Job change for the resource professional such as being transferred to another position or shifting job responsibilities, often leading to withdrawal from the partnership.

3. Lack of commitment by the partnering agency, as illustrated by a lack of long-term support for the program, especially for the time off required by resource professionals to participate in an extended partnership.
4. Job change for the teacher, including move to another grade level, content area, or building or the reorganization of the school or teaching location.
5. Lack of relationship among partners, experienced as incompatibility of philosophy, energy level, personality, or "power level," lack of common interests, lack of consideration and mutual support, lack of critical mass and support in small (i.e., two member) partnerships, and lack of communication. Frequently, leaders observed that partners "just didn't click."

"Moderate predictors" of the demise of partnerships include four qualities reported less frequently by team members and leaders. These are:

1. Trauma or drastic change such as the loss of a teacher or resource professional as a team member through death, maternity or sick leave, or moving, loss of a classroom through school reorganization, loss of a land lab, or strike threats.
2. Lack of commitment by teachers because of competing demands or programs already at the school, misunderstanding about the length of the program commitment, or mismatch with the program's goals.
3. Proximity, that is, teachers located in different buildings or the resource professional based a significant distance from the school.
4. Lack of equity demonstrated in a partnership in which all team members did not share the responsibility for planning, preparation, and communication, and nor did they share professional knowledge.

Six "low predictors" of the demise of partnerships, mentioned infrequently, were apparent in the data including:

1. Weak resource professional who does not work well with children, participates and communicates minimally, and is perceived as inflexible.
2. Lack of commitment to the program by the school administration, evidenced by failure to provide resources and support, and unawareness of the program's activities.
3. Negative workplace relationships, especially resentment from other teachers not involved with the program.
4. Outmoded professional development as when teachers feel they "outgrew" the partnership or have been sufficiently empowered by the partnership that they no longer need the formal relationship.
5. Curriculum changes, including a change in the course of study and grade level topics, a year-long plan that proves to be unrealistic, or too many grades or different courses of study involved in one partnership.
6. Parents, specifically those who complain about the activity-based nature of the program or those who cause resentment among teachers by requesting transfers of their children to classrooms participating in the program.

Insert Table 3

For a discussion of the results and implications of this endurance data, see Jenkins (2001).

Discussion

If a partnership's endurance is a proxy for its effectiveness, it is important to understand what contributes to endurance or demise. Reviewing the predictors of

SWEEP). Recall that the programs targeted reform-based partnerships which, by definition, are long term (at least one year), supported by multiple levels within the school and partnering agency, goal-oriented, collaborative, and focused on enhancing science instruction.

The characteristics identified as qualities of partnerships that endure (see Table 2) suggest that teams which endure are, indeed, examples of Wright's Teams. For example, Wright's Teams are comprised of strong individual members. In the data, the most frequently cited predictor of partnership endurance is a strong resource professional. (Recall that 57 of the 62 team leaders interviewed were teachers who might have hesitated to characterize themselves as strong, or to identify teacher strength as a reason why the partnership endured.) The strength of the members and their commitment to the program and to education is pervasive on the endurance list.

Further, members of Wright's Teams lend their strength to the group to meet realistic challenges and to solve problems. They help each other out as one way of ultimately reaching the Team's goal. In the data, leaders of the enduring teams speak of the resource professionals and teachers providing classroom assistance for each other, everything from gathering resources, making telephone calls, cleaning up after activities, and managing students during activities to paperwork and routine classroom chores. Indeed, one of the main roles for the resource professional was to help the teachers out by connecting them with resources from their agency and the community, thus enriching their science curriculum. The mutual help characteristic of Teams is also suggested in the interview data which speaks of the enduring team members' commitment to the program, especially developing and carrying out the year-long curriculum plan, bouncing

ideas off each other, and presenting an educationally sound program that benefits the children. All of this planning, organizing, and implementing requires continuous interaction, brainstorming, and low-level problem solving.

The interview data further suggest that the enduring teams were highly compatible, homogeneous, and "just plain liked each other." This is another characteristic of Wright's Teams. The data show that members of teams that endured shared a strong commitment to the program, to science education, and to the environment. This enabled them to easily develop mutual goals and to discern ways to reach those goals, drawing upon the strengths of the group. Interviews show that members of enduring teams enjoyed having other adults to work with, worked well together because they held the same philosophies and attitudes toward children, and were committed to the same viewpoints about education and the environment. Further, they frequently shared the same interests, age cohort, and love for science. They enjoyed learning how to be a team, and enjoyed learning and working together. They respected each others' ideas and time by being flexible, sharing team leadership, and cooperating. Their interactions were both formal and informal, professional and social, and frequently strong friendships resulted.

Finally, the enduring teams seemed to work in positive contexts. Wright posited that the amiable Team organizational structure is most effective in relatively problem-free work contexts. This sort of context is suggested in the interview data as leaders ascribe support and enthusiasm from their students, administrators, parents and the community as reasons for their partnerships' endurance.

It seems, then, that the partnerships that endured are examples of Wright's Team configuration. They had strong individuals who enjoyed collaborating. The plans they made and problems they encountered seem relatively routine and low-level. Further, their work contexts sound supportive at a multitude of levels, and multiple benefits of the partnership are enjoyed by the team members, students, school, and community. This suggests that educational partnerships which are organized as Teams "work" in many elementary school contexts.

Were the partnerships that met their demise, then, not organized as Teams? At first glance, this appears to be the case for at least some of the former teams. The list of qualities that lead to a partnership's demise reads like a mirror image of the endurance qualities. The list suggests that these teams had at least some weak members (i.e., the resource professional) and lacked commitment by the resource professional, teacher or teachers, partnering agency, and/or school administration. A relationship among the partners was also lacking. Leaders of demised teams spoke of philosophies, energy levels, and personalities which were incompatible, lack of communication among members, and lack of common interests. Individuals from defunct partnerships with only two members frequently cited the "lack of critical mass" and support in such a small team as reasons for not continuing the partnership, factors which were magnified if the two team members were not a good match in the first place. Further, consideration and mutual trust were frequently lacking in the inactive teams. Leaders felt that the lack of equity on their teams contributed to their demise. The absence of these characteristics of Wright's Teams suggests that perhaps partnerships which met their demise did so because they were not organized as Teams.

Another explanation, however, is that the disbanded teams were originally organized as Teams, but that they were inflexible. Perhaps one or more group members of these disbanded partnerships expected the group to work like a Team and for everyone to fulfill the stereotypic roles of Team members: agreeing, working side-by-side at the same tasks, sharing all tasks equally, becoming friends. The group, however, may have been heterogeneous with one or more independent individuals posing different viewpoints, challenging other team members' thinking, wanting to fill more specialized roles, or resisting social interactions with the group. According to the interview data, this was sometimes the case with resource professionals who brought a different perspective to the partnership, often were a different gender, and were not socialized into the generally amiable way elementary teachers tend to interact. It may explain why some resource professionals were considered to be weak team members by others in the group, as shown in the demise data. During the first year of the partnership, this diversity may have caused discord. If the partnership was inflexible and restricted itself to a Team configuration, demise would seem inevitable. If, however, the group had acknowledged its diversity and changed to a Pack organizational pattern, the partnership may have endured and perhaps even flourished. The lack of ability or willingness to modify the partnership's organization, then, may explain the demise of a partnership Team. Flexibility may be a key in partnership endurance.

This was clearly the case with one partnership comprised of a fifth-grade teacher and a resource professional who was director of a historic farm. Many local residents were strongly opposed to the state's proposal to refocus the farm into a living museum. Nancy (pseudonyms are used throughout this chapter), the teacher, was outspoken in the

effort to preserve the farm and its herd of cows. Bill, the farm manager, removed the cows anyway, leaving a trail of resentment in the community. Soon after their pairing, it was obvious that Nancy and Bill were not a good match for a year-long partnership. They did, however, recognize that the partnership would enable them to achieve mutual educational goals. While they would never be friends, they determined to work together professionally in spite of their differences. The partnership was active, provided effective educational programs to Nancy's class and others in the school, and led to professional development for both Nancy and Bill. At the end of the year, they agreed to disband their team. They departed on good terms yet strongly disagreeing on issues related to the farm. When Nancy and Bill discovered that, although they shared many of the same goals, they could not form a Team, they organized their partnership as a Pack. The strength and energy from this partnership was rooted in its diversity and synergistic thinking. The Pack configuration enabled both members to fulfill their commitment and to benefit from the experience. If Nancy and Bill had tired to organize or present themselves as a Team, their partnership would have failed.

Another way of interpreting the data is that the disbanded teams were organized as Teams, but that they functioned in a negative, stressful context which did not support this organizational structure. Wright posited that the Team configuration is the least effective for working in a difficult context. Indeed, during the interviews and focus groups members of defunct teams described adverse working conditions. They cited lack of support from school administrators and partnering agencies and parents who complained about the activity-oriented approach the science program introduced. They felt jealousy and resentment from other who were not involved with the program. This

was fanned by well-meaning parents who requested that their children be moved from those classrooms into classrooms participating in the program. In some situations, proximity of the resource professional to the partnering school caused stress. In perhaps the worst case scenario, one field-based resource professional was located a 2½ hour drive from the school site. The data supports Wright's theory that partnerships organized as Teams do not function well in these adverse environments. If they had adopted a Pack configuration, the divergent thinking and role specialization inherent with those models may have enabled them to work around contextual barriers and to endure as partnership teams.

A fourth possibility suggested by the demise data is that the now-defunct partnerships organized themselves as Teams, but encountered difficult problems which they were unable to solve so they disbanded or did not endure beyond their first year of partnering. The interview data suggest that the disbanded partnerships frequently experienced problems, including job changes for both resource professionals and teachers. All three teachers in one partnership, for example, were transferred to different grade levels and buildings before the end of summer. Unable to overcome these job changes, they disbanded at the beginning of the school year. Members of other disbanded partnerships sometimes cited curriculum changes as a reason for their demise. Specifically, changes in the course of study and grade level topics as a result of state and district curriculum revisions meant that the year-long curriculum plan they developed as part of the program no longer "fit" their teaching assignment. Partnerships involving teachers from too many grade levels working from different courses of study tended not to endure, nor did those which developed curriculum plans which were too grandiose to

cover in the allotted time. In addition, some disbanded teams experienced great trauma or drastic changes, which were moderate predictors of their demise. A teacher from one close-knit partnership team was killed in a tragic automobile accident during that team's second year of partnering. The other team members were so traumatized by the loss that they felt they had to withdraw from participation in the program, at least temporarily. They were comforted, however, by the close relationships developed as part of the partnership experience. Again, as Wright noted, the Team configuration does not work well when it encounters difficult problems such as these.

But many partnerships encountered difficult problems and did endure. The data suggest that these partnerships utilized divergent thinking to explore alternative solutions to the problems they experienced as a Pack would do. One team lost a teacher due to an extended pregnancy leave. They invited the substitute teacher to join their team, and mentored the new member to become a regular part of their partnership until the original teacher returned. Other enduring teams losing members to pregnancy or sick leaves persisted but reduced their activity level until the full team reassembled. The resource professional for one team was disabled for nearly an entire school year due to an automobile accident. Because they were excited about the curriculum they jointly developed, the three teachers moved ahead and completed the school year as well as they could with little involvement from the resource professional. The following year, he was able to rejoin the group and it geared up to the activity level it initially planned.

It seems, then, that many of the enduring partnerships may have actually been functioning as Packs rather than Teams. Two partnerships illustrate this. The first, dubbed the Central partnership, was comprised of Kevin, a male sixth grade teacher,

Stacy, a female sixth grade teacher in the same building, Linda, the curriculum director for the school district who worked out of the central office, and Donna, an enthusiastic and energetic resource professional. The partnership experienced a strong first year. Team members obviously worked well together and became good friends. Because of their enthusiasm for the program, they spawned a second partnership at another school in their district. Donna served as the resource professional for that team as well, and Linda joined with two female third- and fourth-grade teachers from that school to form the new partnership. During the second year, Kevin became terminally ill and died. The remaining members of the partnership were devastated. The original partnership disbanded for the remainder of the year, but reorganized to a three-member team and rejoined the program the following year, partly as a tribute to Kevin.

A second case was the Brooks-Brooks team, so named because two of the members, Bobbie Brooks, a fifth-grade teacher, and Dick Brooks, a sixth-grade teacher, were married. Also part of the partnership were Sharon, a fourth-grade teacher from another building in the district, and two resource professionals, Roberta and Cheryl. This partnership seemed to experience difficulty from the beginning. Cheryl almost withdrew from the summer institute because she didn't want to partner, didn't like the program, and wanted no involvement with children. For some reason she stayed, although she provided little input and was frequently upset as the group juggled multiple grade levels, different courses of study, and conflicting personalities to develop a year-long, innovative science curriculum. They literally began the school year with a bang: they knocked down the wall separating Bobbie's and Dick's adjoining classrooms to provide one large learning area (it was never clear if they had full administrative support for this

"modification"!). Although school budgets were tight, they forged ahead and gained permission to combine classes across the two buildings for many activities, using school busses and parent volunteers. They communicated across buildings as pen pals (the rural schools had no computers), set up buddy systems across grade levels, and established collaborative learning activities among the classes. They rotated locations and times for team planning sessions and for combined class activities and field trips. The energy and enthusiasm of the partnership was obvious early in the school year, partly because of the positive response from students and parents. Cheryl was not only won over, but became one of the most vital and enthusiastic team members. They experienced difficulties (beyond the wall that needed to be knocked down): Cheryl changed jobs and was relocated farther from the school, Roberta's work responsibilities changed and limited her availability to the partnership, a new resource professional joined the team to compensate but proved to be a weak member, district budgets tightened and busses were no longer available, and the list goes on. The Brooks-Brooks partnership not only endured for years, it also flourished. Group members provided inservicing to other district teachers about hands-on science and partnering, they established additional partnerships within the district, they wrote and won grants to purchase equipment and develop land labs, they present papers at professional conferences about their partnership experience, and they experienced tremendous professional and personal growth.

It seems that the Central and Brooks-Brooks partnerships exhibit both the characteristics of partnerships that endure and the characteristics that lead to a partnership's demise. The reason they endured difficult contexts and great problems when other teams did not, perhaps, was that they were either initially or subsequently

organized as Packs rather than Teams. Applying Wright's model to the real world of partnering evidenced by the Central and Brooks-Brooks teams, what might a partnership Team look like as opposed to a partnership Pack? First, it seems that the leadership is different. A Team, as derived in Wright's algebraic model, has shared leadership; a facilitator rather than one clear chief, and probably that responsibility would be rotated. Because of the homogeneity and agreement among Team members, consensus is easily reached and there is no need for a dominant leader. A Pack, in contrast, may have a distinct leader; not a domineering leader, but one who listens to and responds to all members, then motivates group members to move toward their common goal. It seems that a recognized leader is necessary to moderate the disagreements and divergent thinking which are part of the Pack's diversity, and to lead the group in knowing when and how to adjust. A Pack, it seems, would require both good leadership and good followership. Dick seemed to assume the leadership role with the Brooks-Brooks partnership while Linda gently moderated the Central group.

Second, Team members share responsibilities and roles. They help each other out and all perform the same chores, attend the same meetings, combine classes and team teach their lessons, and work toward solving problems they experience. It is important to Team members that everyone contributes and participates equally. Members of a Pack, on the other hand, would sometimes have different, more specialized roles that draw upon their individual strengths and specialties. Recall Wright's explanation that the strength of the Pack depends on the diversity of strengths and roles of the individual members and how they apply these to solve difficult problems and to survive adverse contexts. This is especially evident in the Brooks-Brooks team. In fact, the turning point

for independent Cheryl seemed to be when she realized that she had unique knowledge and "connections" to contribute to the partnership; she had a distinctive and vital role in its effectiveness.

Third, it seems likely that some individuals may function more comfortably in Teams, while others would prefer the Pack configuration. As Wright noted, with the Team configuration individual strengths are, in fact, stronger than the problems the Team experiences. This leads one to wonder if the Team configuration might be too restrictive for some individuals who might feel unchallenged or become bored by the Team experience. It seems that sanguine individuals whose learning styles lead them to prefer collaborative, group efforts and to avoid conflict would prefer to be part of a Team. Effective Team members would also be individuals who are comfortable in a relatively stable context. On the other hand, outspoken, independent people who are good at divergent thinking and relish the challenge of resolving conflicts may function better as part of a Pack. Theoretically, effective Pack members would be more comfortable in a less stable context and would anticipate and prepare for flux. These qualities characterize the members of both the Central and the Brooks-Brooks partnerships. The sole exception was the resource person added to the Brooks-Brooks partnership, who never seemed confident or comfortable with the group.

Implications and Recommendations

Although Wright's (1994) model is derived from mathematics, it enables us to question the organizational characteristics of educational partnerships which endure and those which, for a variety of reasons, meet their demise. Because the data presented from this study is high inference data and because the partnerships explored were somewhat

unique in that they were reform based partnerships, the data must be interpreted and findings applied with caution. Nevertheless, the insights gained from this model and from the interview and focus group data hold suggest considerations for leaders who seek to establish educational partnerships and for members of partnership teams, whether they are flourishing or struggling.

First, we need to consider what sort of partnerships we are putting together. Should we build Teams or Packs? Most formalized partnership efforts seem to advocate a Team configuration. Is this the best approach? These data suggest that we consider building Packs instead of Teams, at least in difficult educational contexts.

Second, who we put on partnership teams needs to be examined. Many partnerships are made up of volunteers who may not clearly understand the people with whom they will be working nor the context in which they will work. Early in our summer institute, we conduct "Job Alike" groups. The teachers form one group, and the resource professionals meet as a group in a separate room. There, they brainstorm what they want the other group to know about their work environment. The two groups come together and share their lists. Similarities and differences of the two lists summarize the activity. This activity enables group members to correct misunderstandings about others jobs, and to bring to the partnership more realistic expectations of the other members' roles. Investigating and understanding the diversity within the partnership should help both Packs and Teams to function better and to endure.

Third, how we put partnerships together needs to be examined. Placements need to be made thoughtfully, not randomly. Does an individual prefer group work and a close working relationship, or is independent work and problem solving his forte? How

comfortable is the individual with conflict and sometimes stressful environments? Does the individual need the approval of others, need to be challenged, or need "space"? Time availability, compatibility, and commitment are critical considerations in putting together partnerships. By reducing these potential stressors up front, we can increase the likelihood that the partnership will endure.

Fourth, we need to prepare individuals for partnering. It seems apparent that individuals entering an educational partnership need effective partnering skills if the partnership is to endure and to work toward educational reform. They need to understand the difference between Team and Pack organization, and the strengths and weaknesses of each configuration. Partnership members need the ability to form Teams and to morph into Packs as the context changes or as situations demand. Flexibility rather than rigidity seems to be a key to partnership endurance.

Fifth, we need to prepare individuals for the context of partnering. Partnerships need to know in advance about the environmental realities which can contribute to their demise. They need to know what they'll encounter and anticipate how they will adjust so that their group will endure. Context concerns raised most commonly by partners during troubleshooting discussions at our partnership institutes include how to deal with jealousy from peers who are not involved in the program, how to justify this educational approach to skeptical parents, how to legitimize field trips and non-traditional educational activities to budget conscious administrators, and how to gain positive visibility in the school district and community. While some of these concerns appear on the demise list, other problems contained therein should be part of this discussion as well.

Sixth, we need to know more about educational partnerships. Enduring partnerships need to be the target of thoughtful case studies. A better understanding of their composition and functioning is needed: how do partnership members interact with each other; how and when do they change organizational structure; are different sorts of individuals more effective in different organizational structures; is one organizational structure more effective than others at bringing about educational change?

Figure 1: Partnering Continuum (after Rigden, 1991)

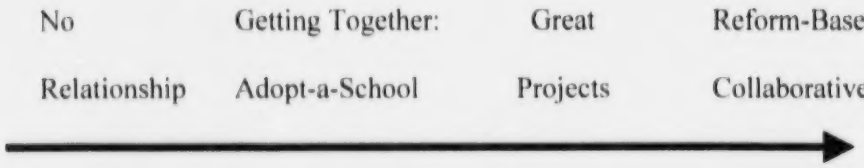

Table 1: Partnership Endurance Trends

	Years of Endurance				
Status	0	1	2	3	4
Active	0	6	12	7	6
Inactive	3	19	2	2	5
Total	3	25	14	9	11

(X = 2 years; M = 2 years; mode = 1 year of activity)

Table 2: Characteristics of Partnerships that Endure

Strong Predictors:

1. Strong Resource Professional
2. Commitment to the Program
3. Assistance in the Classroom
4. Collaboration
5. Commitment to Science Education or the Environment
6. Benefits for Children
7. Positive Relationship among Partners

Moderate Predictors:

1. Excitement and Satisfaction with the Program
2. Professional Growth and Development
3. Parents
4. Administrative Support

Low Predictors:

1. Equity
2. Flexibility
3. Positive Relationships with Children
4. Benefits for the School
5. Benefits for the Community

Table 3: Characteristics of Partnerships' Demise

Strong Predictors:

1. Lack of Commitment by Resource Professional
2. Job Change for Resource Professional
3. Lack of Commitment by Partnering Agency
4. Job Change for Teacher
5. Lack of Relationship among Partners

Moderate Predictors:

1. Trauma or Drastic Changes
2. Lack of Commitment by Teacher
3. Proximity
4. Lack of Equity

Low Predictors:

1. Weak Resource Professional
2. Lack of Commitment by School Administration
3. Negative Workplace Relationships
4. Outmoded Professional Development
5. Curriculum Changes
6. Parents

References

Altrichter, H. M., Posch, P., & Somekh, B. (1993). *Teachers investigate their work.* New York: Routledge.

Bainer, D. L. (1997). A comparison of four models of group efforts and their implications for establishing educational partnerships. Journal of Research in *Rural Education, 13*(3), 143-152.

Bainer, D. L. (1998 October). *Why partnerships endure.* Paper presented at the National Symposium of Partnerships in Education organized by the National Association of Partners in Education, Los Angeles.

Bainer, D. L., Barron, P., & Cantrell, D. (1998a Summer). *Sciencing with Watersheds, Environmental Education and Partnerships (SWEEP): Instructor s guide to Implementation.* (Available from SWEEP Project, The Ohio State University at Mansfield, 1680 University Drive, Mansfield, OH 44906).

Bainer, D. L., Barron, P., & Cantrell, D. (1998b). *Sciencing with Watersheds, Environmental Education and Partnerships (SWEEP): Participant's Manual.* (Available from SWEEP Project, The Ohio State University at Mansfield, 1680 University Drive, Mansfield, OH 44906). Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics and Environmental Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 429 807).

Bainer, D. L., Barron, P., & Cantrell, D. (1996/97). Enhancing science instruction in rural elementary schools through partnering. *The Rural Educator, 18*(2), 12-16.

Britt, L.A. (Ed.). (1985/86). *School and business partnerships*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.

Cobb, C., & Qualgia, R. J. (1994, April). *Moving beyond school-business partnerships and creating relationships.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Hord, S. M. (1981). *Working together: Cooperation and collaboration.* Austin, TX: Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, University of Texas. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 226 450).

Jenkins, D. B. (2001, October). *Characteristics of enduring partnerships.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association, Chicago.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Rigden, D. W. (1991). *Business/school partnerships: A path to effective restructuring*. New York: Council for Aid to Education.

Rigden, D. W. (1992). *Business and the schools: A guide to effective programs* (2nd ed.). New York: Council for Aid to Education.

Sills, B. A., Barron, P. & Heath, P. (1993, June). School reform through partnerships. In *Report of the Synergy Conference: Industry's role in the reform of mathematics, science and technology education* (pp. 68-71). Leesburg, VA: Triangle Coalition.

Wichienwong, W. (1988). *The relationship of acministrators' involvement in the evaluation process and evaluation attitudes*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.

Wright, B. D. (1994). Composition analysis. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher, 7*(2), 29-36, 38.

Wright, B. D. (1996, Summer). Pack to chain to team? *Rasch Measurement Transactions, 10,* 501.

SP016884

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF EFFECTIVE VS. LESS EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS	
Author(s): DEBORAH BAINER JENKINS	
Corporate Source: STATE UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA	Publication Date: OCT. 2001

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☑

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Deborah Bainer Jenkins	Printed Name/Position/Title: DEBORAH BAINER JENKINS
Organization/Address: STATE UNIV OF WEST GA	Telephone: 770-836-4461 FAX: 770-836-4612
Carrollton, GA 30118	E-Mail Address: djenkins@westga.edu Date: Apr. 12, 02

(over)